LAST SUNDAY WE DISCUSSED THE GREAT GAP THAT PRESENTLY EXISTS BETWEEN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT AND CHRISTIAN LIVING, AND THE NECESSITY OF CLOSING THIS GAP. IF YOU WERE PRESENT, HOPEFULLY YOU CAN RECALL THAT WE APPROACHED THIS PROBLEM THROUGH ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS, BEGINNING WITH HIS ADVISE TO PRESENT YOURSELVES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE UNCONFORMED TO THE WORLD. THIS WEEK I WANT TO DISCUSS FURTHER PAUL'S THOUGHTS ON A CHRISTIAN LIFE AND AGAIN I WILL TURN TO THE 12th CHAPTER OF HIS LETTER TO THE ROMANS. YOU WILL RECALL, THIS IS THE POINT AT WHICH PAUL CHANGES HIS DISCOURSE FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE. ALL THAT COMES BEFORE THE 12th CHAPTER IS LOFTY THEOLOGY/BUT AT THE 12th CHAPTER PAUL SAYS, SINCE ALL THESE THINGS ARE TURE THAT I HAVE JUST SAID ABOUT GOD AND JESUS CHRIST, SIN AND THE LAW,/SINCE THESE ARE TRUE WE HAVE CERTAIN OBLIGATIONS MUST DO SO AND SO.

ALSO LET US AGAIN RECALL THAT IT IS IN THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS THAT PAUL IS ADDRESSING A GROUP OF MEN HE DOESN'T KNOW. BECAUSE HE HAS NEVER BEEN TO ROME HIS ADVISE IS GENERAL AS FAR AS CONCRETE SITUATIONS GO, BUT VERY SPECIFIC AS HE DISCRIBES THE GROUNDWORK OF A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST. THAT IS WHY THE LETTERTO THE ROMANS IS PARTICULARLY APPLICABLE TO US TODAY. PAUL HAD NO CONCEPTION WHATEVER OF THE DAY TO DAY PROBLEMS CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE TO FACE 2,000 YEARS AFTER HE WROTE HIS LETTER. AS A MATTER OF FACT HE FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT THE END OF THE AGE WAS CLOSE AT HAND.

BUT HIS ADVICE ON WHERE TO BEGIN WHEN TRYING TO LIVE AS A CHRISTIAN, THE PREREQUISITES, THE ASSUMPTIONS WE MUSTMAKE ARE JUST AS TURE TODAY AS THEY WERE THEN AND WILL BE FOREVER.

NOW LET US TURN TO THE CENTRAL THOU HT OF PAUL'S, THE CHARACTERISTIC THAT MUST UNDERGIRD ANY CHRISTIAN LIFE, THAT OF LOVE.

LOVE IS A THOUGHT THAT OCCURS AGAIN AND AGAIN THROUGHOUT ALL OF PAUL'S LETTERS. LOVE is central for him, it is the CORNERS STONE OF HIS CHRISTIANITY AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS. HIS THOUGHTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE REACH THEIR ~~MXEM~~ HEIGHTH IN THE WELL KNOWN 13th CHAPTER OF 1st CORINTHIANS/TO WHICH I WILL RETURN LATER. FOR PAUL THE VERY REASON FOR LIFE IS/LOVE: LOVE WAS THE MOTIVATING FORCE BEHIND CREATION AND THE POWER THAT RESULTED IN THE ULTIMATE APPEARANCE OF JESUS CHRIST. LOVE IS THE POWER THAT WILL HOLD THE CHURCH TOGETHER, IT IS THE MORAL FIBER THAT FLOWS UNDERNEATH AND THROUGH THE COMMUNITY OF CHRISTIANS.

WITH LOVE, AS IS THE CASE SO MANY TIMES, WE CANNOT FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE WORD MEANT 2,000 YEARS AGO. TODAY IF ONE WANTS TO EXPRESS HIS DEEPEST FEELINGS LOVE SIMPLY DOESN'T SEEM TO FILL THE BILL, IT IS PRETTY MUCH OF A USELESS TERM.

THE FOUR LETTER WORD LOVE HAS BEEN REDUCED IN MEANING BY A NUMBER OF FACTORS, THE GREATEST OF WHICH IS THE MASS MEDIA. HOLLYWOOD HAS DRAGGED THE WORD LOVE THROUGH MUD AND SLUSH, THROUGH SLOPPY SENTIMENT/AND TELEVISION HAS FOLLOWED ALONG THE SAME LINES. THE HARM DONE BY THESE TWO MEDIA, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN FAR SUPERSEDED BY MAGAZINES AND 25¢ novels. In these later two forms the word love has lost completely ANY VESTIGES OF BEAUTY AND SINCERETY AND HAS BECOME THE PASS WORD FOR PROMISCUITY AND FILTH. ~~IT WAS~~ THAT THE CHARMING YOUNG LADY ON THE FRONT OF MY TRUE CONFESSIONS, WHOSE ARTICLE ENTITLED "I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT LOVE WAS UNTIL I MARRIED MY 8th HUSBAND" APPEARS IN EVERY

SUCH MAGAZINES, IS TALKING ABOUT THE SAME THING AS PAUL. IN REALITY NO / BUT IN THE MINDS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IT COULD EASILY BE SO.

BECAUSE OF THIS MASS DEGRADING OF THE WORD LOVE, A BY-PRODUCT OF IT, OUR DIVORCE COURTS HAVE OVER STUFFED DOCKETS. OR PERHAPS AS

OUR POPULAR SONGS REFLECT THE AMERICAN IDEA OF LOVE. LOVE IS THE EMOTION THAT DESCENDS LIKE A LIGHTENING BOLT, THAT MAKES BELLS RING, AND CAUSES ONE TO FEEL DIZZY. IT MAKES THE LIGHTS GO DOWN LOWE AND MAKES MUSIC RING IN OUR EARS. LOVE IS THE WORD WE USE FOR SWEET STICKY AFFECTION, WE LOVE OUR DOGS, WE LOVE OUR CARS, OUR CHILDREN, OUR TOWN AND OUR COUNTY. WE LOVE EACH OTHER AND CERTAIN BOOKS, WE LOVE THIS COLOR AND THAT DRESS, THIS ACTOR AND THAT PIECE OF MUSIC, WE LOVE GOD AND THE AMERICAN FIAG, (LOVE) IS SIMPLY AND UTTERLY MEANINGLESS!

IN A WAY THIS IS NOT ENTIRELY OUR FAULT. LOVE IN ITSELF IS A VERY DIFFICULT WORD TO DEFINE. WHEN ONE ATTEMPTS TO COME UP WITH WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE PHENOMENON OF LOVE HE FINDS THAT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HAS A SHORTAGE OF SYNONYMS IN THIS AREA.

PHILOSOPHERS FROM THE PRESENT BACK TO THE TIME OF PLATO, THE FATHER OF PHILOSOPHY, HAVE TRIED TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF LOVE. THEY HAVE DEVOTED DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF LOVE, DIFFERENT NAMES FOR DIFFERENT FEELINGS THAT SEEM LIKE LOVE.

PHILOSOPHERS ANDTHINKERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE RECOGNIZED THAT THE EMOTION WE CALL LOVE IS THE STRONGEST OF THE HUMAN EMOTIONS. LOVE CAN PROMPT A MAN TO LAY DOWN

HIS LIFE FOR ANOTHER, LOVE CAN BIND A GROUP TOGETHER UNSEPARABLY, LOVE CAN BE THE AGENT OF HEAVENLY HAPPINESS AND ALSO THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR.

TO COPE WITH THE MANY SIDED, NATRUE OF LOVE THE ANCIENTS CAME UP WITH A FEW DIFFERENT WORDS. THEY SAW THAT TO LUMP EVERYTHING INTO ONE WORD WOULD BE CONFUSING.

THEY USED THE WORDL FILIA TO DESIGNATE PARENTAL LOVE, THE FEELING BETWEEN A MOTHER AND CHILD. ANOTHER THING ALTOGETHER WAS THE FEELING ONE HAS FOR HIS MATE OR A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, THIS THEY CALLED EROS OR ROMANTIC LOVE. AND THEN THEY ALL KNEW THAT STILL ANOTHER IMPORTANT TYPE OF THIS FEELING EXISTED WHICH THEY CAILED AGAPE. THIS, IN ESSENCE, IS DIVINE LOVE, SELF SACRIFICEING, DEEP AND BEAUTIFUL. LOVE BETWEEN GOD & MAN or MAN & MAN when it is

THESE THREE WORDS ARE USED IN THE N.T. GREEK AND LATIN TEXTS AND EACH HAS ITS OWN SEPARATE AND INDIVIDUAL MEANING. OUR PROBLEM, IN TALKING ABOUT LOVE, ARISES FROM THE FACT THAT ALL OF THESE WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS ARE LUMPED INTO ONE WORD.

JUST AS A SIDE NOTE, THIS IS ONE OF THE GREATEST PROBLEMS ECNOUNTERED IN TRANSLATING ANOHER LANGUAGE INTO ENGLISH. FOR OUR WORD ~~XXXXXX~~ BLUE THERE ARE 17 GERMAN EQUIVALENTS EACH MEANING A SEPARATE AND DIFFERENT THING. AND AS WE HAVE SEEN, FOR OUR WORD LOVE THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE GREEK WORDS THAT MEAN THREE SEPARATE THINGS.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE WORD AGAPE IS THE ONE MOST WIDELY USED, AND THE ONE WE ARE CONCERNED WITH TODAY. BEFORE WE TRY TO DEFINE IT AND DISCOVER ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR A CHRISTIAN LIFE, HOWEVER, LET US LOOK AT THE ~~[illegible]~~ TO OUR TEXT FOR THIS MORNING. that is second half of Paul's statement

PAUL TELLS THE ROMANS TO LET LOVE BE GENUINE AND IN THE SAME BREATH TO HATE WHAT IS EVIL.

THE TWO GO TOGETHER. IF LOVE IS TRUE, IF LOVE IS ACTUALLY GENUINE THENE WE MUST HATE WHAT IS EVIL. THE SECOND PART OF THE STATEMENT IS NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE FIRST. IF WE FOLLOW PAUL'S ADVICE AND TRULY ATTEMPT TO LOVE GENUINELY WE ARE AUTOMATICALLY OBLIGATED TO HATE THAT WHICH IS NOT DESERVING OF OUR LOVE. THIS IS NOT ADVICE OR SWEET SOUNDING ENCOURAGEMENT, IT IS A CHALLENGE, AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES WE HAVE AS CHRISTIANS.

THAT THERE IS EVIL IN THE WORLD IS NOT A QUESTION FOR PAUL. IT IS THERE AND IT IS THE NEVER ENDING JOB OF THE CONSCIENTOUS CHRISTIAN TO FIGHT IT AND STAMP IT OUT. TO FIGHT, TO BATTLE, AND TO WIN, SEEM LIKE CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS TO--LET LOVE BE GENUINE. BUT THEY ARE NOT. THEY ARE AN IMPORTANT PARTOF THAT STATEMENT. LOVE CANNOT BE GENUINE UNLESS IT IS RILED BY EVIL. GENUINE LOVE, BECAUSE IT IS GENUINE, BY ITS NATURE HATES EVIL.

THIS QUESTION OPENS THE DOOR TO ISSUES THAT HAVE BEEN VOICED AND ARGUED FOR CENTURIES, "HOW CAN I LOVE AND FIGHT FOR MY COUNTRY?" "HOW CAN I LOVE GENUINELY AND DEFEND MYSELF?" IT IS A VALID QUESTION ONE THAT WILL CONTINUE TO BE ARGUED FOR CENTURIES TO COME. THE ISSUE WAS RAISED, VERY LEGITIMATELY, IN OUR CONGREGTIONAL MEETING ON

THURSDAY EVENING BY A FEW OF OUR MEMBERS AND BY A NUMBER OF OTHERS WHO HAVE VOICED THEIR QUESTIONS SINCE THAT TIME. OUR CHURCH WAS CONSIDERING JOINING THE LAKE COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, A NEWLY FORMED ORGANIZATION THAT INCLUDES THE VAST MAJORITY OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN LAKE COUNTY.

AMONG MANY OTHER THINGSIT DOES, THE COUNCIL HA S TAKEN A FIRM STAND ON ~~NARROW~~ NUMEROUS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES. THE ONE IN QUESTION ~~IN QUESTION~~ CONCERNED A BIT OF FRAUD AND THEFT ON A HIGH POLITICAL LEVEL THAT WAS UNCOVERED BY A SENATE INVESTAGATING COMMITTEE. DUE TO THE TOTAL CORRUPTION OF THE POLITICAL MACHINE IN QUESTION THE MEN WHO WERE DISCOVERED WITH THEIR HANDS IN THE PUBLIC TILL WERE NEVER PROSECUTED. THE LAKE COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT AND AT PRESENT IS SUPPORTING A LAW WHICH is somewhat involved in SUIT TO ~~DO SOMETHING ABOUT~~ CORRECT THIS SITUATION.

THE QUESTION AROSE AS TO WHETHER THIS IS THE APPROPRIATE WAY FOR THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST TO ACT. SHOULD THE CHURCH PUSH THEIR STAND ON ISSUES TO THE POINT OF GOING TO COURT. THIS OF COURSE INVOLVES A MULTITUDE OF OTHER ISSUES, SUCH AS THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH, (THE STATE, WHAT IS JUSTICE AND SO ON. THESE QUESTIONS CANNOT BE PASSED OVER, (BUT TIME DOES NOT PERMIT ME GOING INTO THEM.)

HUMAN JUSTICE IS AN ABITRARY THING, (OUR CODE OF LAW, OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM ITSELF IS QUESTIONABLE FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. HOWEVER, IN THE COURTS WE ARE PROVIDED A WAY OF FIGHTING AND ELIMINATING EVIL. IT IS A MEANS THAT IS DIGNIFIED AND WHICH AS NEARLY AS POSSIBLE TAKES INTO ACCOUNT REASON AND LOGIC. IT IS A SYSTEM DEVOTED TO

MAKING THE DECISION AS TO WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS WRONG. IN TRYING TO DECIDE WHICH PATH TO FOLLOW

ST. PAUL GIVES US THE ANSWER AS TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND HOW WE SHOULD ACT IN THE FACE OF EVIL. LET LOVE BE GENUINE, HATE WHAT IS EVIL.

THE LAKE COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES HAS DONE JUST THAT, HAVING RECOGNIZED AN UNABASHED ACT OF EVIL, THEY HAVE HATED AND TAKEN STEPS TO FIGHT AND ELIMINATE IT.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF CHRISTIAN LOVE, AN OBLIGATION THAT FOR ONCE HAS NOT BEEN SHIRKED, AND I AM DEEPLY PROUD THAT OUR CHURCH HAS VOTED TO BECOME A PART OF THIS STRUGGLE AGAINST EVIL.

AS I HAVE STATED BEFORE LOVE APPEARS TIME AND TIME AGAIN IN PAUL'S LETTERS: AND IN MOST CASES IT IS THE WORD AGAPE THAT HE HAS USED. YOU WILL RECALL I BRIEFLY DEFINED AGAPE AS DIVINE OR SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE. THIS IS THE KEY TO LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFE FOR ~~KMMEK~~ PAUL, LOVE IS THE KEY TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD.

DIFFERENT MEN HAVE HAD DIFFERENT WORDS TO DESCRIBE GOD, SOME HAVE BEEN POWER, JUSTICE, MERCY, OMNIPOTENCE, FOR PAUL THESE AND MUCH MORE ARE BOUND UP IN THE ONE WORD AGAPE OR LOVE.

GOD CREATED THE EARTH AND ALL OF NATURE NOT TO SATISFY HIMSELF, BUT BECAUSE HE LOVED, GOD REVEALED HIMSELF TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL BECAUSE HE LOVED, GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN JESUS CHRIST NOT TO SHOW MEN HOW SINFUL THEY WERE BUT BECAUSE HE LOVED. THE AIR WE BREATHE, THE TREES, RIVERS, HOUSES, STREETS, FRIENDS, WIVES, FAMILIES ARE OURS BECAUSE GOD LOVES, THEY ARE GIFTS OF LOVE. LOVE IS THE OMNIPOTENET POWER BEHIND THE

TIME AFTER TIME AGAIN

UNIVERSE, LOVE IS ONLY CONCERNED WITH OTHERS, ~~THE OBJECTS OF LOVE.~~

It is this kind of love that Paul means when he says in the text - as soon.

IT IS THIS SYSTEM OF THOUGHT THAT GIVES DEFINITION TO THE WORD AGAPE. BECAUSE GOD HAS SO LOVED US/THE BEST WE CAN DO,/ THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO/ IS SHOW THE SAME FEELING TO EACH OTHER.

JESUS CHRIST DIED ON A CROSS,/NOT TO BE A DISPLAY OF DIVINE POWER,/ BUT BECAUSE MANKIND IS THE OBJECT OF A DEEP AND INFINITE LOVE. WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

IN OUR RELATIONS WITH EACH OTHER WE MUST DISPLAY AS BEST WE CAN THIS SAME LOVE OR AGAPE. IT MEANS UNSELFISHNESS, IT MEANS CONCERN FOR THE OTHER PERSON, IT MEANS SHARING ANOTHERS GRIEFS AND JOYS,/IT MEANS PUTTING PERSONAL DESIRES ASIDE AND BEING INTERESTED ~~GREATLY~~ IN THE PROBLEMS OF ANOTHER.* THIS IS CHRISTIAN LOVE. THIS IS CHRISTIAN LIFE.

* and it means firm stand against evil

* If we are serious in our attempt to be Christian we must try every minute of every day to put this theory into practice -

I HAVE FOUND THE WORD LOVE MORE MEANINGFUL WHEN I READ THE 13th CHAP. OF 1st Corinthians LEAVING OUT THE WORD LOVE OR CHARITY,/ A SECTION OF IT WOULD SOUND LIKE THIS:

* WHAT IS translated

and substituting * an imaginary name - the person who exercises the Love

- it serves as a standard I wish could fulfill

~~Robert Steele~~ - ~~he~~ one ~~whom~~

"~~He~~ is patient and kind; X is not jealous or boastful, ~~he~~ is not arrogant or proud. X does not insist on ~~his~~ own way: ~~he~~ is not irritable or resentful; ~~he~~ does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. ~~He~~ bears all things, believes all things, endures all things....."

These words describe the characteristics of Christian Love - and of a true Christian

~~This X is something more than our four letter word, it is genuine.~~

IN STRIVING TO LIVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN LET US MAKE THIS LOVE A PART OF OUR DAILY ~~MODE~~ way OF LIVING/ ~~BUT~~/ ALWAYS REMEMBERING THAT THIS LOVE HATES EVIL, IT IS NOT A BLIND LOVE,

BUT ONE THAT IS DISCERNING.

to last weeks statement

IN OUR STUDY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WE NOW ADD--PRESENT YOURSELVES AS A SACRIFICE, UNCONFORMED TO THE WORLD, / LET LOVE BE GENUINE, HATING WHAT IS EVIL.

This is our call, let us not ignore it. Whether it be in a stand against evil, ~~[illegible]~~ or in a moment of quiet Friendship with another ~~person~~ person. ~~let us~~ may our love be ~~genuine~~ true. May we never hesitate to share completely the joys and sorrows, the happiness or pain of another - May we never Forget that we are the objects of a love deeper than our imagination can comprehend - and that because of this we must love genuinely